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ABSTRACT

This digest uses a question-and-answer format to summarize basic information about the use of Cued Speech (a sound-based hand supplement to speechreading) with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Cued speech is briefly explained, noting its primary use with hearing families of young children who are deaf and in regular education classrooms when those children enter school. A listing of other groups who may use Cued Speech includes families and professionals working with children with autism, Down Syndrome, deaf-blindness, cerebral palsy, auditory processing deficits, and severe physical disabilities. Benefits and limitations of Cued Speech are briefly addressed. Benefits include ease of learning, reinforcement of speech therapy, and improved speechreading. Among limitations of Cued Speech mentioned are reliance on speechreading, the insufficient number of Cued Speech transliterators, and the individual's need to also learn American Sign Language to communicate with the Deaf community. A list of questions is provided for parents considering Cued Speech as a communication option. (Contains 13 references or resources.) (DB)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
1920 Association Drive • Reston, VA 20191-1589
1-800-328-0272
E-mail: ericec@cec.sped.org Internet: http://www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm

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Barbara Caldwell

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THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
1920 Association Drive • Reston, VA 20191-1589
1-800-328-0272
E-mail: ericec@cec.sped.org Internet: http://www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm

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# Educating Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Cued Speech

Barbara Caldwell

**What is meant by "Cued Speech"?**

Cued Speech is a sound-based hand supplement to speechreading. Eight handshapes representing groups of consonants are placed in four positions around the face that indicated groups of vowel sounds. Combined with the natural lip movements of speech, the cues make spoken language visible.

Cued Speech was developed by R. Orin Cornett, Ph.D. at Gallaudet University in 1965-66 (Cornett, 1967). His research was one of the responses to a report by a federal government study critical of deaf education, in particular, unsatisfactory literacy levels among high school graduates who were deaf. The purpose of this communication tool was to improve the early English language development of children who are deaf and provide them with a foundation for English reading and writing. Cued Speech has been adapted to approximately 60 other spoken languages and dialects. It is used in schools and programs for children who are deaf, but its primary use has been within hearing families of young children who are deaf and in regular education classrooms when those children enter school.

**Who can use Cued Speech?**

Families of and professionals working with children with hearing losses, symptoms of autism, Down Syndrome, deaf-blindness, cerebral palsy, and auditory processing deficits have used Cued Speech (Beck, 1985; Cornett, 1985). Families of individuals with physical disabilities that make them unable to speak use Cued Speech through a vision board that tracks eye gaze toward cue groups on a grid. This aid is called Nu Vue-Cue (Clark, 1984). Cued Speech has been used by regular education teachers for phonics instruction, by speech therapists for articulation therapy, and by deafened adults to re-establish communication with their friends and families. Young adults who grew up using Cued Speech use it to communicate with other cuers and their hearing friends who learn it.

**What are the benefits of Cued Speech?**

For families of children with disabilities, Cued Speech removes communication barriers. Normal interaction is restored quickly because the system can be learned in about 18 hours (Cornett & Daisey, 1992). Once the system is mastered, any word in the language can be cued as well as environmental sounds, nonsense words found in children's literature, proper nouns, and the large number of English words for which there are no sign language equivalents. It provides an appropriate foundation for reading and writing English. Children who have grown up using the system read and write on the same grade level as their hearing peers (Wandel, 1989).

While not developed for purposes of speech training, Cued Speech provides a system that reinforces the work of the speech therapist, showing pronunciation, accent, duration, and the rhythm of speech. Since Cued Speech is presented with natural, running speech, it has been shown to improve speechreading when the cues are not in use.

**What are the limitations of Cued Speech?**

While sounds that look alike are distinguishable because of the hand cues, lip movements still are an integral part of the system. Cuers must make lip movement and be within 20 feet of the cue-reader. The upper body and face should have adequate light. Cued Speech is not an ideal platform medium.

The Cued Speech system is more than 30 years old. The numbers of cuers and support groups vary throughout the United States, but Cued Speech is not available everywhere. Parents of children who are deaf sometimes meet with resistance from their local school administration when they choose to use a system not usually offered in that district.

The number of available Cued Speech transliterators (proficient cuers who cue what instructors say), while growing, is insufficient for the demand, primarily because Cued Speech students are usually not placed in programs where one transliterator can serve several students, but are mainstreamed in their neighborhood schools.

Unless they learn American Sign Language (ASL) as a second language, students who grow up using Cued Speech are not able to communicate with the larger community of Deaf adults who use sign language.

**What are some questions to ask in choosing this option?**

The questions below should be asked when deciding any communication option.

1. Is this the most appropriate communication tool for our family to use?
2. How long will it take us to learn and where can we learn it?
3. Will we be committed to using it as much as possible as we interact?
4. Is support available and, if not, are we determined enough to do it on our own?
5. What results can we expect from using this communication tool? (If those expectations are not met within an appropriate time frame, another option should be explored.)

**References and Additional Resources**

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Wandel, J.(1989). *Use of internal speech in reading by hearing and hearing impaired students in oral, total communication, and Cued Speech programs*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York.

National Cued Speech Association: NCSA@naz.edu

Alternatives in Education for the Hearing Impaired
2020 E. Camp McDonald Rd.
Mt. Prospect, IL 60056
(708) 297-3206

Cued Speech Discovery Bookstore
23970 Hermitage Rd.
Cleveland, OH 44122-4008
800-459-3529/(V/TTY)
e-mail: CuedSpDisc@aol.com

Cued Speech Center, Inc.
304 E. Jones St.
Raleigh, NC 27601
(919) 828-1218 (V/TTY)

New York Cued Speech Center
825 East 18th St.
Brooklyn, NY 11230
(718) 434-7406

Sunshine States Cued Speech Services
4442 Bay Shore Rd.
Sarasota, FL 34234
(941) 355-4194 (V/TTY/FAX)
e-mail: CUEFLORIDA@aol.com

West Coast Cued Speech Program
348 Cernon St., Suite D
Vacaville, CA 95688
(707) 448-4060 V/TDD
e-mail :LRupert601@aol.com

*Barbara Caldwell worked with Dr. Cornett for six years during the development, early research, and implementation of Cued Speech. She is a past president of the National Cued Speech Association and director of Sunshine States Cued Speech Services in Sarasota, Florida.*

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